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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BIGTIME SMUGGLER, MONEY LAUNDERER GUNNED DOWN IN  
SOFIA

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: One of Bulgaria's biggest contraband dealers and money launderers, Ivan Todorov (a.k.a. the Doktor), was shot dead in broad daylight in central Sofia February 22. The killing of Todorov shattered a three-month period of calm since the October murder of controversial banker Emil Kyulev. Todorov's assassination coincided with the EU's review of the highly charged Justice and Home Affairs chapter and Bulgaria's effectiveness at combating crime. It also comes one day before the new Prosecutor General, Boris Velchev, was to be sworn into office. Todorov was scheduled to face charges for money laundering in March in what could have been the government's first conviction of a major organized crime figure. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Todorov was shot dead in his car around 2 p.m. on a busy street in Sofia not far from the U.S. Embassy. According to our legal attache, the murder clearly was a professional hit and extremely well planned. Todorov's Porsche Cayenne was blocked by another vehicle and sprayed with bullets by two assailants, who later fled the scene. Todorov died on the spot)examiners found over 10 bullets in his body--while his driver was rushed to the hospital in critical condition. The police have at least five witnesses to the crime and a partial description of the license plate of the fleeing car. Authorities have issued a physical description of the two assailants and immediately initiated searches of vehicles and stores around the city following the shooting.

13. (C) Todorov was considered to be one of the largest drug traffickers in the Balkans and actively involved in cigarette smuggling and tax evasion. In the early 90s, he became involved with a small criminal group that was associated with illicit trade and robberies. He later worked for a Syrian citizen who was operating the drugs and arms smuggling channels during the Communist regime. In 2004 Todorov was convicted of kidnapping and robbing a businessman and was sentenced to five years in prison. The sentence, however, was recently overturned by the Supreme Cassation Court. Todorov allegedly was being targeted by the Marinov brothers))two of the surviving members of the organized crime group SIC who were arrested last November and are still in jail. Todorov and three of his associates were due to appear in court in March to face charges of money laundering))a case which our legatt and the FBI have been working jointly on with the Bulgarians for some time.

14. (SBU) Todorov was virtually unknown to the general public until a failed attempt on his life in April 2003 brought him into the spotlight. Todorov survived an explosion from a car bomb planted on his Mercedes on one of Sofia's main thoroughfares. The device killed Todorov's driver instead who by chance had switched seats with Todorov who was driving the

vehicle. The attempted killing became a political scandal after pictures found in the car showed Todorov on a yacht in Monaco playing cards with Finance Minister Milen Velchev, the former Transport Minister Plamen Petrov and parliamentary deputy Miroslav Sevlievski.

15. (C) COMMENT: The killing of Todorov has denied the government its best chance so far of successfully prosecuting a major Bulgarian crime figure. It also shines an embarrassing spotlight on Interior Minister Petkov's weak scorecard of success in fighting organized crime since the Kyulev killing. Ambassador Beyrle met with Petkov shortly after Todorov's killing, pressing him to ensure the investigation leads to results (unlike the Kyulev murder). The initial signs appear promising, according to our Legatt, with the Todorov crime scene being properly secured and the police doing their best to coordinate their efforts with prosecutors. Authorities are being more cooperative than during the Kyulev investigation and invited Legatt to join a high-level review of the initial stages of the investigation, but they have yet to accept our offers for technical assistance with the case. END COMMENT  
Beyrle